

## **Tyfu Cymru: Technical Advice Sheet**

### **Pumpkin PYO Marketing with Covid**

#### **Pick Your Own Management with Covid**

While many of the covid-19 restrictions are being relaxed, it's likely to continue to pose a challenge for growers for the foreseeable future – especially for those selling directly to customers for whom a high footfall on site is needed to achieve good profitability. PYO fruit sales have been strong over the summer, with many growers achieving close-to-normal practice on their site. Many of the selling points of PYO pumpkin sales – activities in the open, access to large open fields – means that social distancing measures can be more easily addressed than indoors. It will still be necessary, however, to make some adjustments to ensure the safety and enjoyment of your customers while they are on site.



#### **Before Customers Visit**

Many PYO growers have experience of advertising their sites to customers through a variety of channels, including online and social media. A clear message that you are open for business, alongside any changes you have planned for this year, will help attract visitors to your site. Some customers may be concerned about covid persistence on fresh produce, but latest advice is that fresh produce poses no risk of infection<sup>1</sup>. You can also make clear statements about your covid provisions so that customers know what to expect when they visit.

You may also consider a booking system to help manage visits. This will avoid congestion, and improve customer's confidence in being able to visit your site without being turned away at the gate. Many fruit PYO growers are finding the public has become more understanding of a closed farm gate at capacity, and the ability to book will help to manage this. You could plan for timed slots for customer visits so you can control how many people you have on site whilst staggering visits to keep numbers controlled for social distancing. Customers will normally spend about 20 - 40 minutes on site, but this may be longer if you have other activities. You may also want to consider limited numbers of party to keep your site from becoming overcrowded.



You may wish to have customers pay a deposit in advance when booking which could be redeemed against whatever they buy on-site. Be clear what an individual ticket covers – you could ticket per person (charging differently for adults and children), allowing a free child with every adult ticket, or family tickets for groups of a set size. This will help to ensure a minimum income, whilst reducing the risk of no-shows. If you do ask for a deposit, be clear about the terms and conditions such whether the booking is refundable or transferable if someone has booked on day with bad weather.

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/biosafety\\_crisis\\_covid19\\_qandas\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/biosafety_crisis_covid19_qandas_en.pdf)

If you don't have a website running you might consider using one of the available platforms for selling tickets. These generally feature handy plug-ins so they can be linked up with your social media platforms.

### Customers On Site

You should consider the entire journey that a customer will take once they reach your site, and make adjustments where you can. You could consider the following:

- Clear signage, preferably with a one-way system where possible will help to avoid congestion.
- Where people are likely to line up, such as at payment points (entrances, wheelbarrow collection, cash registers), have clear marking on the ground at 2m intervals to separate customers.
- Hand sanitizer stations at strategic points will also help customers to keep sanitary during their visits.
- Have a member of staff managing disinfection stations for wheelbarrow or sled stations so handles can be wiped down between use.
- If you have produce stalls screen these off and have dedicated staff to serve customers so customers won't handle produce they are handling – you might find this good practice for post-covid times as it's no longer a free-for-all.

### Selling & Marketing

For soft fruit, growers have been selling customers a container to fill as opposed to usual system of charging by weight of fruit picked. While this might be difficult for pumpkin, you might want to consider alternate methods of selling rather than by weight alone. For example, customers could drop pumpkins through graded holes to allow sale by size, or through different size hoops on the end of sticks. As part of minimising contact with customers consider a cashless payment system – more information on the systems available can be found in the Tyfu Cymru factsheet on contactless payment system.

### Ideas for an Added-Value Experience

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- Offer a pumpkin washing station, where people can give a donation to charity to have their pumpkin pressure washed.
- Cakes and coffee can be sold on a take-away or drive through basis - this has been shown a surprisingly good take-up for soft-fruit PYO!
- Promoting buying local and buying Welsh, or as a unique outside family experience.
- 'Pumpkin Pantry' - share pumpkin's culinary uses, teach people how to cook them and provide recipe sheets to stimulate ideas. Pumpkin can be promote as a good choice for bulk meal prep on a budget, or plan-and-freeze ahead food.
- Carving school, possibly in unused barns or polytunnels - £2 on top of the cost of the pumpkin, or perhaps more if you are including pumpkin carving tool kits.
- Halloween retail for sweets, chocolate or decorations for Halloween.
- Making saleable items e.g. horseshoe pumpkins.
- Running PYO for a range of crops, e.g. sweetcorn, sunflowers (which can be sown in late August). Even potatoes can be an idea – these are popular for kids who can “dig for treasure” - let them have a fork and a sled, digging from the soil fosters a connection with food).

Plastic carving kits (right) can be sold as part for pumpkin carving activities as single-use tools that won't require decontamination between customers. Spaced out benches that are laid out for social distance will also help. To provide time to clean up stations you could consider timed slots to stagger demand, and these could be included as an additional option if you are asking customers to book online in advance.

